

1/24/2005 This Week in Congress

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January 24, 2005

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find it useful.

President Bush Inaugurated in Washington, D.C.

On January 20, President George W. Bush was inaugurated to his second term as our country's 43 president. With the president's second term under way, I now hope that Congress and our country are able to put aside the partisan differences that were prevalent throughout the past election year.

I look forward to working with the president in his second term on the issues that are important to states like Kansas, which helped him to be reelected.

Canadian Beef Imports

This week, I called on the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to postpone allowing Canadian beef imports until a better understanding of the risks to America beef producers can be reached. Over the past few weeks, Canada has announced three separate, confirmed cases of BSE.

The USDA will be sending a team to Canada to investigate that country's compliance with a 1997 ban on the use of feed containing materials from cattle at risk of having BSE. While the U.S. and Canada have similar feed ban regulations, recent reports indicate that the feed ban may have been violated, expanding the risk of BSE in Canadian cattle. It is important that the USDA fully investigate the effectiveness of the feed ban in Canada before opening these markets. The health of the American beef industry, and the ability to regain export markets, cannot be put at risk.

The USDA has done a tremendous job of keeping the industry safe from BSE, but before we reopen the borders, an investigation should be completed to ensure that this level of safety will continue.

I also encouraged the USDA to continue efforts to reopen beef exports to Japan. The Japanese export market accounted for over \$1.39 billion in American exports in 2003.

Remembering Greenwood County Sheriff Matthew H. Samuels

On Sunday, I joined friends and family of Sheriff Matthew "Matt" Samuels at his funeral in Eureka. Sheriff Samuels was a lifelong public servant whose life was tragically cut short. On Wednesday, January 19, Sheriff Samuels was serving a warrant at a home north of Virgil when he was shot.

My family and I offer our deepest sympathy to the Samuels family for their loss. Words cannot express the sadness that comes with losing a loved one, especially under these circumstances. People in Greenwood County lost more than just a community leader, role model and hero. However, Sheriff Samuels death is not in vain and is a stark reminder of the need to redouble our efforts to combat the rising meth problem that faces our rural communities. This is an issue that I have been especially concerned about, and I will continue working to ensure that our law enforcement officers have all the tools necessary to combat the rise of meth use in Kansas.

However, today, the rest of Kansas joins Greenwood County in mourning the loss of Sheriff Samuels.

Honoring the Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

On Monday, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, I joined Hutchinson-area residents, state legislators and city and county officials in a ceremony to commemorate the life and the dreams of the civil rights leader.

During the speech at the Second Baptist Church, I emphasized that our world is a troubled place, and that no one is perfect. But Dr. King understood that. By fighting for brotherhood and for equality, he changed our world.

In the speech I said, "Our world, our country, this community, and each individual here today need to go back and rediscover the values of our past. The values of love, respect for others, charity, compassion, honesty, the recognition that people matter more than things, and that some things are right but many things are wrong. What Dr. King said fifty years ago is still true, 'the thing we need in the world today is... men and women who will stand for right and goodness.'

"It is a great honor for me to be a Member of Congress. But I recognize that what happens in Washington, D.C., what happens in Topeka, or what happens at the Reno County Courthouse pales in comparison to what good can happen when each of us lives our lives committed to something eternal and absolute - when we are willing to stand up for what is right and what is good."

With all the challenges we face today, we need a Martin Luther King Jr.-someone who will lead us and speak the truth for future generations.

Learning About Pratt Community College

This week, I joined President William Wojciechowski of the Pratt Community College, for a meeting to learn more about the advancements being made to offer courses and education to people in central Kansas. During the hour-long meeting, we discussed the college's automotive technology, ag power technology and nursing education departments.

I also had the opportunity to meet with students in the American Government class and discussed my role as a Member of Congress. We talked about the future of Kansas, the current state of the nation, as well as issues that Congress will be considering in 2005.

Also while in Pratt, I joined Ken Brown and Susan Page of the Pratt County Medical Center for the Pratt Rotary Club Meeting.

Meeting with Officials at the Cloud County Community College

Education issues were also the topic of conversation during my meeting on Friday with President George Knox, of Cloud County Community College in Concordia. We discussed what can be done for President Knox to advance the college's Title III funding application. The college would like to use the funding to enhance academic programs relating to their nursing education, criminal justice and journalism programs. Additionally, we discussed the important issues surrounding the Perkins and Pell grant programs.

Following my meeting with President Knox, I joined students, faculty and community leaders for a tour of the campus and facilities.

FHSU to Expand Distance Learning in Salina

Also on Friday, I joined the President of Fort Hays State University (FHSU), Dr. Ed Hammond, to announce a new partnership between the university and the Smoky Hill/Central Kansas Education Development Center to give central Kansas residents greater access to higher education.

The interactive television system was launched three years ago, linking classrooms at six community colleges to FHSU. The Salina location will be the newest site. This partnership is possible through funding I helped to obtain through the U.S. Department of Education. The course offerings will be both undergraduate and graduate level courses in everything from education to nursing.

Executive Director of the Central Kansas Education Development Center Rita Cook joined us for the event along with Dennis King, director of FHSU's Virtual College and Learning Technologies.

In the Office

A number of Kansans were in Washington, D.C. this week to take part in the inauguration ceremonies. Alberta Brinkman of Emporia was in Washington with several friends and came by the office for a tour of the capitol. Also in for a tour were Lori Swift and her son, Robert, as well as Maleta Forsberg, all of Lindsborg, as was Anna Gregory of Topeka.

Very truly yours,

Jerry